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THE  
TOCSIN;

OR,

*AN APPEAL TO GOOD SENSE.*

By the Rev. L. DUTENS,  
HISTORIOGRAPHER TO HIS MAJESTY, RECTOR OF  
ELSDON IN NORTHUMBERLAND, AND F.R.S.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

By the Rev. THOMAS FALCONER.

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MISSIN

AN ATTEMPT TO GOOD SENSE



By the EDITORS

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE MUSEUM, REGENT OF  
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PRINTED BY THE EDITORS

By the REV. THOMAS FALCONER

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE LAST EDITION.

THIS little Work appeared at *Rome*, for the first time, in the year 1769, in French, under the title of "*The Tocsin*." It has since been frequently reprinted at *Turin*, at *Paris*, and at *London*. The motive has been commended, and the execution has been approved by the respectable and the judicious. To the false claimants of superior genius it has been an occasion of invective against the Author, because perhaps he has unmasked with too little reserve their absurdities and their conspiracies. He now offers this New Edition to the Public, with some slight corrections, hoping that he may still please the former, and continue to deserve the censure of those,

## ADVERTISEMENT.

whose approbation he should blush to receive.

Some particular reasons had induced the Author to change the title of "*The Tocsin*," to that of "*An Appeal to Good Sense*." He has restored the old title to this edition, or rather he has combined the two together.

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THE  
TOCSIN

OR,

AN APPEAL TO GOOD SENSE.

**C**ITIZENS of every rank, of every sect, of every nation! a man, whose regard has a wider range than the compass of a single state, feels an eager anxiety to be your counsellor in an affair of the greatest moment. Your present and your future welfare depend on the effect which my words may produce. Read them with all your power of attention. It is the cause of each individual which I plead; it ought not to suffer through the neglect of any; but it pains me to assert, that you show too little

solicitude to distinguish your friends from your enemies, and you degrade the importance of the admonition which is offered.

Suppose a person should come and inform any one of you, that a man, whom he had received into his house, and who was enjoying every advantage of hospitality, was nevertheless a traitor, who wished to undermine and destroy it, such a report would be reluctantly believed; but if its truth should be discovered, he would be impressed with the deepest horror against the outrage, and would instantly drive such a monster from his shelter. I am only describing however the part which is daily acted in society by a small number of personages, who have assumed the specious character of Philosophers, that you may more certainly be deceived. My intention is to tear off the veil which conceals their  
hypo-

hypocrisy, and expose the danger which you incur by listening to their addresses.

We always understand by a philosopher, a man virtuous and enlightened, whose sole object is to communicate his knowledge to others, and diffuse his light; the friend of established order, and its anxious guardian, whose tranquil tenor he would not disturb by any possible tendency of his writings, his words, or his actions. Such were Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato; such were some of the Roman Emperors, who at the same time graced the throne, and were an honour to human nature, the Antonines, and Marcus Aurelius; such also were the Des Cartes's, the Leibnitzes, and the Newtons of our own times: but such certainly are not those writers, whose works, as dangerous as they are pleasant and ingenious, tend only to lay in ruins the foundations of religion, that important bulwark of morality,

rality, that sure rampart of society, raised against the attacks of lawless passion.

I cannot be persuaded that we shall always remain so infatuated, so blind, as not to perceive the malicious spirit of these enemies of the human race, and the dreadful confusion which would ensue from our credulity and rash confidence. For in whatever point of view we survey their attempt, what can be a more adequate cause of alarm than the rapidity of their daily advances? Our conviction of this truth, will be the result of the reflection of a moment only. The authority of man indeed has enacted laws for the establishment of order in society; but the empire of these laws extends to open crimes only, and public offences. It has decreed punishments to deter the offender; but when the offender is assured that impunity is certain, what force shall arrest his career?

Reli-



Religion on the contrary supplies all that the limited views of man cannot foresee, and all that his imperfect power cannot prevent. The law cannot punish detraction, envy, ingratitude, avarice, and a thousand other vices, which are the sources of the most painful contention, and the motives of the darkest actions. Pride, perfidy, and cabal, have their daily triumphs over modesty and innocence; and these kinds of depravity are out of the reach of the arm of temporal justice. What then would become of mankind if Religion, whose peculiar province it is forcibly to address herself to the mind and the heart, should in vain attempt to make her language to be understood; if she should not be known to point out rewards to the just, and to alarm the wicked by the terrors of her chastisement?

With

Withdraw Religion and her attendant fears from the world, and you will see more crimes spring up than ever appeared amongst any people immersed in the most loathsome barbarism. Withdraw Religion, and you will hear the most fluent abuse of benefactors by the ungrateful; you will see them draw from the generous every favour in their power, and repay their kindness by returns of the most opposite nature: you will see the detractor communicate a poignancy to conversation by the wounds which he inflicts on the character of his best friend: you will see the envious surrender himself a willing captive to the passion which incessantly preys upon him, and the ambitious trampling under his feet the sacred yoke. Adultery would then become a pastime, and the seduction of innocence a subject of exultation. The licentiousness, which pervades the conversation and the writings of a  
few,

few, would be reduced to practice by all: and woe be to those who have not, in a favoured moment, opposed some mound to the torrent of irreligion, and who shall find themselves overwhelmed in the devastation which it will spread through society!

Perhaps I shall be told, that Religion, notwithstanding its denunciations, has not always the power of preventing the excesses, which I have been describing. This at least must be acknowledged, that those, who incur the guilt of such actions, have unfortunately hardened themselves against her rebukes, that these crimes would become more common if the reign of Religion did not restrain their career, and that those only are capable of committing them without remorse, who have shaken off her control.

What would follow if these pretended philosophers should succeed in communicating

cating to every individual their own spirit of independence? For you suppose of course that they meditate the substitution of some other mode of religion in the place of that which they purpose to destroy. You would pay them however too great a compliment, if you attributed so much consistency to their proceedings. Their design is to pull down; it never was a part of their intention to build up. But what madness, you exclaim, what extravagance in speculation! What advantage will they acquire by success? Observe the explanation of this unintelligible conduct of these men.

Every individual has passions which he wishes to gratify. When they are indulged to that degree, which in the consideration of religion constitutes criminality, this divine law becomes an intolerable yoke from which they endeavour to extricate themselves.



selves. They veil their eyes against a light which dazzles and confounds; they are deaf to arguments which might convince them of their absurdity, if their attention could be gained; and at length nearly arrive at that state in which they think that they have succeeded in disengaging themselves from the shackles of reason and prejudice, and the weakness of the human mind. In order, however, to confirm this idea, they deem it necessary to strengthen their party by an accession of numbers; and they use every art, and undertake every labour that may conduce to the attainment of this object. You know not how far the passion of a writer will lead, who has resolved to acquire a name. If it be requisite to this purpose to abandon every other consideration, no sacrifice can be too splendid. He who publishes opinions apparently new, or controverts those which are generally received, flatters himself that he shall rank  
above

above the vulgar herd ; and such an author, who is incapable of distinguishing himself by his knowledge or his genius, aims rather at exciting wonder in weak understandings by the singularity of his opinions, than is satisfied with remaining in the class of men of moderate capacity, who are strangers to a vanity which can make such glory a reward.

I have the best reasons for using this language. No one is better informed than myself of the designs of these enemies of society ; their conspiracies, and their hatred, as well secret as avowed, against religion. I wished to know them from inspection. I have studied them in their actions and their conversation. I have explored their motives and intentions. I have discovered nothing but littleness within that exterior grandeur annexed to their system of opinions. I have observed that their strength

6 consisted

consisted in our weakness. Their fierce and violent invectives, spared neither in their conversation nor in their writings, continually betray their cause. They are transported with vexation when they behold the greatest men bow down before religion. They are confounded with shame to be obliged, in order to satisfy their inclinations, to contend against a religion, by the doctrines of which they are condemned.

I one day asked one of those philosophers, whether, on the supposition that religion was an invention of men, he did not think that it was a system the best adapted to promote the welfare of mankind? He could not but assent that it was. Have you then, I continued, a better system to substitute in its place, if your efforts, allied with those of other champions of

irreligion, should succeed? No, he replied; but when this structure is fallen, men naturally disposed to devotion will soon raise another out of its ruins. "But," said I, "what imprudence is this of yours! Why are you anxious to destroy a building, which you think useful and firm, in order to give us the trouble of erecting another, the advantages of which you cannot explain? And besides, where will you find a shelter for us in this interval? who will defend us against the injuries of envy, of ingratitude, and of a whole crowd of vices, which do not come under the cognizance of the law, and against which religion alone can afford some protection?" I perceived that this apostrophe did not accord with the taste of my zealous deist, but he made no answer to my objection.

There



There is one always at variance with himself\*, inconsistent as well in his conduct as in his writings. By a morality, apparently of a severe kind, by leading the life of a cynic, and by writings replete with fire, eloquence, and genius, he has influenced some minds of more sensibility than strength. He has attacked in the most singular manner the government and the religion of the country in which he lives, in a book, where, among other things, he has established this as a principle, "that whoever writes against the religion and the laws by which he is protected, is worthy of death." He has advanced paradoxes which cease to surprise as soon as we perceive that he himself is one of the greatest. He has irreverently compared the Founder of the Christian Religion to the author of the Academic Sect. But to what has this false philosophy

\* J. J. Rousseau. *This was wrote thirty years ago.*

tended? To light the torch of discord among his fellow-citizens; in this respect, far from imitating the example of Socrates, when that philosopher had such strong reasons to complain of his judges. To avenge the insult offered to his writings the modern philosopher has driven his native land \* to the very edge of ruin. Socrates, on the contrary, refused the proposal of his friends to release him from prison and to rescue him from death, "that  
 " I may not become, said he, an example  
 " of disobedience to the laws." This man, notwithstanding, has found friends to pity, and protectors to receive him in his disgrace; but his boasted philosophy did not check his invectives against his declared benefactor †, directed against him at the very moment when he was generously procuring for him a pension from a great King; and he has finished

\* Geneva.

† Mr. Hume.

this drama by escaping clandestinely from the house of a friend\* who had welcomed him in the most cordial manner, although he could not produce against him the least cause of complaint,

Another†, whose splendid and uncommon abilities have placed him in the first rank in the republic of letters, has abused those powers in the most unjustifiable manner, to produce all the evil which society could suffer from an individual. His rancour against religion appears to acquire new force in proportion to the decay of his mind and body. Possessing a style the most captivating, added to a talent too successfully employed in blending with ridicule the most solemn and sacred subjects, he has enrolled himself in the lists of false philosophy, he has revived the arguments of Porphyry and

\* Mr. Davenport.

† Voltaire.

Celsus, and the apostate Julian, and with a rage surpassing that of these three celebrated antagonists of religion, he has sworn with the greatest hardihood to devote the remainder of his time, and the last efforts of his mind, to the destruction of a system so well calculated to constitute the happiness of mankind. His writings more pernicious, as they abound with wit and pleasantry, contain a poison the most destructive that could distil from the heart of man. A spirit of deism and libertinism is the result of all his positions. In short, "*a nation governed by his maxims can expect neither tranquillity or permanency.*" Never did Religion meet an adversary more terrible, because she never was before assaulted with more constancy, subtlety, and wit. All his readers (even his advocates) observe, however, that his invectives are so violent that they render him often an object of ridicule ; and  
they



they cannot comprehend what interest can prompt his endeavours to subvert an establishment, whose end is to make men better. That I may give a specimen of the ardour with which he pursues the accomplishment of his schemes, I will delineate some features of his character. One of his friends, who was on a journey to the court of a German Prince of high rank, passed through the place where our adversary lived, who, pouring out his whole heart, addressed him with tears in his eyes; "I am obliged," said he, "to confess to you my sorrow. I did once rely on the Prince, whom you are about to visit, for his assistance in the destruction of the Christian religion, but since his advancement to the throne he is so addicted to politics, that he has never once thought of the good cause." I was informed by another of his friends, that one day after dinner he

called in his servants, and inquired of them all in succession, whether they were Christians, and presenting a glass of wine to those who replied in the negative, he threatened to dismiss one who hesitated to second his malicious zeal \*. There is something in this action so unworthy a wise man—unworthy did I say—so nefarious and so abandoned, that, disposed as his guest was to admire his opinions, he was shocked at the indecency of that scene. Yet these are the oracles consulted by the daring spirits of the age, and it is amongst these persons that objections so often refuted are still repeated, and serve to mislead weak minds, whom they wish to seduce.

\* A certain author of a journal thought to invalidate this testimony by considering these anecdotes as forgeries: but how has he had the audacity to advance such rash assertions unaccompanied with proofs? These anecdotes are related exactly in the same terms in which I heard them recited to the persons who were principally concerned.

It

It has frequently happened to me to be present at the conversation of half-a-dozen thoughtless young men upon the most abstract questions in metaphysics and theology, repeating indiscriminately the miserable arguments with which they had been supplied by some pamphlets of this rash old man, who seems in haste to accumulate them incessantly before death comes to interrupt his machinations. In short, I should never conclude if I was to detail all the indecorum which his hatred to religion impels him to exhibit daily. But is it not disgraceful that so many people of sense should renounce for a witticism the greatest advantage which man can enjoy? Is it possible, if so many men of the first genius, who have supported religion, should be arranged on one side, that the author of some dramatic works and some pleasant tales should be the superior host on the other? No. Our countenance is not fallen, we  
can

can assemble the largest proportion of the great men in Europe in our favour. Without recurring to the early ages, and reviewing the respectable names of the founders and defenders of the Christian religion at that time, behold those illustrious who have shone forth in the space of one single age. You would see them not only prostrate before her altar, but collected round her standard. The Newtons, the Leibnitzes, towering far above the sciolists against whom I direct my cautions, have asserted her cause. Locke, that just and eminent man, has commented on several parts of that book in which her doctrines are taught. Bayle, Pascal, Bossuet, Fenelon, Corneille, Racine, Pope, Addison, whose writings and reputation eclipse those of our adversaries, have thought, that from the defence of religion their talents shone with the lustre of a sacred beam.

An



An objection, which has been a thousand times brought into the field by these gentlemen, is the proportion of abuse that pervades religion. It is true, we must allow that there are great abuses, but reformers arise from time to time by whom they are corrected. Besides, because a sick man wants the aid of a physician to cleanse his humours, does it follow that a knave of an apothecary, or an empiric, should intrude upon him, and oblige him to gorge himself with a pound of poisoned pills, and destroy him, to the disparagement of the art of healing? What would be your language if a surgeon should propose to amputate an arm in order to cure a scratch on the finger?

As to myself, I acknowledge that if these cankers of society should continue their fatal progress, I perceive that *we have every thing to fear from a confusion which must necessarily follow our indifference with respect*  
to

*to religion.* For you will see that this stubborn champion and his satellites will not rest till they have made our destruction certain. He has already seduced to his standard all whose morals induce them to wish that what he affirms may be true, and these compose a considerable part of the Christian world. He writes in a language generally known, and his writings are accessible to all. It is even esteemed an honour to have read them, and to be able to retail his raillery. The most puny thinkers believe that they comprehend his meaning, and wish to shine with the false glare borrowed from his pernicious writings. His language is used at our tables, in our assemblies, in the presence of our children, and our servants. The venom spreads every where. The general mass of society is corrupted ; and war, the plague, and famine have never been the cause of so much destruction as the pen of this pernicious

cious writer has produced, and still produces every day.

But who would not rebel against the arrogance of a man who dares to make the subject of ridicule what his masters have admitted and revered for so many ages? I agree that people in general receive their opinions without examination; but the great names which I have before mentioned are a sufficient authority against the reputation of a small number of men, of false but daring pretensions, who surprise rather than convince. So many true philosophers of all nations, so many profoundly skilled in mathematics and geometry, so many great poets who have defended the Christian religion, cannot they preponderate against the counterfeit weight of a poet, or an agreeable writer in prose? But, alas! he has reason to insult us, for never was there an instance of such  
fervile

servile homage as that which this age offers ; and Mahomet, Ali, and Osman, at the head of their powerful armies, never experienced such rapid success in attempting to establish their religion as attends his project to destroy ours. He is incessantly urging us to renounce a doctrine, the operation of which is so favourable to civil order : in truth, he must necessarily despise our understanding if he can suppose that we are simple enough to listen to such language. Answer me, How would you receive such a proposal from a philosopher of Japan or China ? Would you not consider him as a maniac who ought to be confined, or through pity provide for his return to his own country ? Suppose however that an inhabitant of China or Japan should arrive in Europe with such an intention, he would probably employ the same language ; but would you hear him with the same patient indulgence ? Would  
you



you not be disposed to smile at his folly ; or if the indecorum of his conduct should require it, would you not be tempted to chastise his insolence ? Why then does that which appears ridiculous and reprehensible in one set of men amuse and mislead when practised by another ? What claim have they to be excepted in this treatment ?

Let us then remain a firm body against these invaders of society. It is not a great presumption to entertain a different opinion from these daring pretenders. Let us oppose the reason of our ancestors to their plausible arguments. Let us oppose that good sense which is the common inheritance of all, and we need not dread the event of the contest.

I address myself more particularly to those whose situation in the world exposes them  
to

to the daily attacks of our enemies, and whose ears are incessantly assailed by the most audacious raillery on a subject of the greatest solemnity, and of the highest concern. It is proper they should know how to repel instantly the blows of their adversaries. I would first advise them never to enter into any serious dispute with those foolish and unsteady minds, who always choose that occasion for their dangerous pleasantries, when they are certain of the support of some associated scoffer. When you have reason to think that your adversary does not shew in the course of the dispute a disposition necessary to reap the proper advantage from it, be satisfied with silently contemning his conduct; and, if you can preserve decorum, make him feel it, but be sufficiently cautious how you reply seriously to these buffoons, who only endeavour to expose you to the laughter of their foolish society by the ridicule which they

they study to attach to every thing which you advance on such an occasion ; if, however, you think that your argument may tend to the instruction of some person of good intentions, who may be present, engage in it with zeal, and remember to oblige your adversary to adhere rigorously to the question. Do not allow him for a moment to depart from his subject, or to escape under cover of a witticism, or some frigid pleasantry. Begin with some principle which he must allow ; bring his wanderings back to this principle as often as he deviates, and be assured that by this method you will confound him, and expose to general observation the absurdity of his opinions, and woe be his lot if he himself is not convinced.

In order that I may explain the manner in which you ought to repulse these insulting taunts, it will be proper to acquaint

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you

you with the different species of adversaries with whom you are to contend. We may divide them into three classes: The *Atheists* or *Materialists*, who admit in the universe the existence of one substance only, of which all its parts, as the planets, man, and the inferior animals and plants, are only different modifications: The *Theists*, who admit indeed the existence of a Supreme Being, but who deny that he created the world, and governs it by his providence; who maintain that every principle is extinguished by death, and consequently that there are no punishments nor rewards after this life: in short, the *Deists* properly so named, who admit the same attributes which we assign to the Divinity, who acknowledge the immortality of the soul, punishments, and rewards, but who reject every kind of doctrine and exterior worship.

It



It is easy to convict the former of inconsistency, of absurdity, or of dishonesty. Ask them, if there can be effects without a cause? I do not think that they dare maintain the affirmative; but if they should: what then will be the cause of the wonderful order which prevails in the world? What will be the original cause of intelligent beings, if, according to their hypothesis, matter is the only substance which exists? As to those, who reject the tenets of Christianity, because they are incomprehensible, do they comprehend better how matter refined to a certain degree shall produce thought and reason, and under another combination shall be nothing but a metal or a stone? If they are ingenuous, will they not agree that it is repugnant to their understanding, to believe that the thinking principle is the same substance as a block of marble? And if they persist in asserting that an infinity of combinations

can produce such a world as this ; inquire why, since the lapse of so many ages, Chance has not produced another, or several other worlds similar to this ? But particularly continue your interrogations respecting the manner in which they understand a permanent order deduced from fortuitous motion ? For, in short, either there has been from all eternity an Intelligence which has manifested itself in the arrangement of the universe, and then they are obliged to admit the existence of a substance distinct from passive and blind matter, a first Intelligence, which is God ; or this order, which we perceive, has been the result of an infinity of combinations of the motions of matter, and then there will have been in eternity a time antecedent and preparatory to this result, when this order, and this Intelligence, which we see at present predominate in the world, did not exist. They must then have been  
pro-

produced without any sufficient cause, which cannot be alleged but in contradiction to the established axiom.' If, urged by this reasoning, an Atheist or Materialist still maintains that the universal substance or matter is at the same time cause and effect, do not lose your time with replying, he is evidently dishonest, or rather he has lost his senses, and you would be more foolish than your antagonist, if, after this, you should continue your opposition.

Would you defend yourself against the attacks of *Theists*; of those who admit the existence of a Supreme Being, but who do not allow that He created the world, and still less that He governs it by his Providence; who maintain that every principle dies with us, and consequently that there are neither recompences nor punishments after this life? Desire them to inform you

what they mean by a Supreme Being. If they have not lost their reason they will be obliged to reply, that they understand by this expression, a Being endowed with all the perfections of which we can form any idea; a Being eternal, infinitely great, independent, omnipotent, infinitely wise and good; in short, possessing all the qualities we can suppose, in a degree of perfection, which we cannot even conceive. If they except any one of these qualities they contradict themselves, because he whom they call the Supreme Being would not be so, if he wanted any perfection. But if, according to them, this Supreme Being did not create the world, it must follow that matter created itself, which is an absurdity, or that it is coëval with time \*, and in this case

\* Those, who establish the high antiquity of the world upon the pretended chronology of the Chinese, and their astronomical observations, are refuted by the examination of their observations, made by M. Cassini, in which he has  
disco-



case it would be eternal, and consequently independent, and then there would be two Beings eternal and independent, which is a contradiction; for if matter were independent of the Supreme Being, he would no longer be omnipotent, which is contrary to the definition laid down. Besides, if matter were eternal, it would exist necessarily; and if it existed necessarily, there would be no reason why it should exist rather in one place than another; it would then exist necessarily every where, and thus there would be two infinities, which is again another absurdity, a contradiction both in ideas and terms. If then so many inconsistencies and absurdities be the result

discovered some errors of 500 years in their epochs. See the Memoirs of the Academy of Sciences at Paris, tom. viii. page 557, last line but one, and page 555, line 6, &c. where may be seen from a comparison of the Chinese tables with those of Tycho Brahe, that the former are only tables calculated by the Jesuits, some of whom have resided in China these 150 years, and awkwardly applied to the Chinese chronology. See also Ferguson's Astronomy.

of the hypothesis of uncreated matter, it follows, that it is false, and that a Supreme Intelligent Being must have created the world, which we behold. God or the Supreme Being having deigned to create the world, it is not only not unworthy of his nature, but, consistently with that nature, we must suppose that he governs it; the one is the effect of his goodness, the other of his wisdom. He understands perfectly the system of the world, and it would be blasphemy to assert that its government and preservation would be a labour to its maker.

We infer from the inertness of matter, that motion and its laws proceed from God. A body not possessing motion in itself, nor consequently that direction and degree of activity which might be impressed upon it, cannot preserve itself in all the different states of direction and velocity, since inactivity

tivity is its natural condition, much less could it transfer these qualities to other bodies by communicating to them the power of motion. The greatest philosophers of all ages have acknowledged that motion cannot belong to a body, or be communicated from one body to another, if it was not derived from a spiritual substance abounding with energy, with vigour, and with \* life. Thus then

\* There is no motion without direction, for motion without direction would be motion on all sides at once, that is, it would be repose, which is absurd. Direction is a determination to one side in preference to another; this determination can be the effect of choice only, and choice can only be the effect of intelligence. Besides, if I allow for a moment that motion is essential to matter, I conclude that if it be essential, it is on all sides at once; that is to say, that body, whose essence is motion, must remain at rest, which is absurd. In short, motion without direction is a contradiction; direction is, and can be the effect of choice only; and there can be no choice without intelligence: the existence then of motion proves the existence of an intelligence. *Pinto, Précis contre les Matérialistes à la Haye, chez Goffe 1774, 8vo.*

God

God produces every thing and moves every thing. He has ordained the laws of nature, he knows and governs all that he has produced in the universe; he preserves all by an unfailing assistance, and directs all by the power of his will, and by the full knowledge of his infinite intelligence. We ought to think that the same thing takes place with respect to the action and motion of substances superior to matter, the Creator having communicated to beings, who are made in his likeness, an instinct, which impels them to pursue the constituents of their happiness, and to incline towards the object of their welfare, whilst they nevertheless remain in a state of dependence upon their author. All the arguments, which we advance to prove the order which God has established and preserves in body, may be applied likewise to that which he has ordained among intelligent beings, and the Creator would not neglect the world  
of



of intellect, and watch over that of matter and sense. As to what the Deists of this class affirm, that our soul is mortal, and that there is no other life after this, little as they desire to descend into themselves, you will easily convict them of their mistake. Ask the most pertinacious, if he can suppose that his thought is extended. He would not hazard the affirmative; he would even be the first to expose your folly if you should talk to him of the half or the quarter of a thought, of the right or the left of a thought. If then we cannot assert of thought, or of the thinking faculty (for they are synonymous expressions) that it is divisible, or that it has a left or a right, it will be a simple substance, indivisible, incorruptible, which cannot be dispersed, as not composed of parts, and consequently cannot be destroyed, but by the same power which formed it. But let us consider whether

ther it agrees with our notions of the justice of God, to suppose that he would annihilate a substance intelligent and moral like the soul of man, or whether on the contrary such a determination is not repugnant to his attributes. If annihilation were to succeed, we might see the virtuous disconsolate in affliction, and the wicked with increased possessions, and shining with a full beam of glory, without being able to reconcile this astonishing irregularity with the idea which we have of the attributes of the Divinity. But if there be a future life, virtue finds its reward, and crimes are overtaken by punishment. God shews himself such as we conceive his nature indicates, and at length we comprehend that men are destined in this world to be in a state of probation only, established by his wisdom to chastise or recompense every one according to his virtues or his offences.

It

It remains that I now arm you against the attacks of the *third class of unbelievers*, who will not admit any thing beyond natural religion; who believe that God rewards and punishes, but who will not be convinced by the arguments of those who are persuaded of the truth and necessity of revealed religion. Will you defend your belief, and prove to them openly, that it is the force of reason and not of education which determines you to receive the religion of Christ? Observe that they already allow the necessity of a religion of nature. They cannot deny, that man wants a divine beam, which may light him on his path, and lead him to his duty to his Creator and fellow men. Left to ourselves, could we ever arrive at that perfection of adoration which might be worthy of such a Being, and by which we should render to Him alone a tribute, which to Him alone ought to be

be rendered. A revelation, which instructs us how to attain this great object, is so necessary to man, that it contradicts the ideas of the goodness and wisdom of God to suppose that it was withheld. Among all the revelations which are proposed, it is our concern only to search for that which bears the seal of Divinity, and afterwards to adopt it as the law by which God has been pleased to manifest himself, to instruct us as to his nature and our duty. That which shall teach the purest morality, will immediately present us with a characteristic that will conciliate respect, and its antiquity would secure another prejudice in its favour. The Christian religion then unites these two advantages. Never were doctrines imparted which had so strong a claim to Divinity, nor a morality so pure as that which she teaches. Its antiquity exceeds that of all other systems, being founded on the  
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revelation of the Jews, whose books are without doubt the most ancient that remain. As to the proofs of the authority of the writings in which the Christian religion is contained, they rest on the testimony of their authors, contemporaries with the facts which they record, the companions of their master, and eye-witnesses of all his actions which they relate. They could not be deceived in what they themselves saw and understood; it was impossible also for them to have deceived others, even if they had been so disposed. How could they form a design so vain and irrational, men of simple and uncultivated minds, without art, and without the means of conducting an imposture? It cannot be said that the history, which has been transmitted to posterity, was the work of impostors, because it then would have been a more perfect composition, without those apparent contradictions which proved that the authors were not skilled in the art of deceiv-

deceiving mankind. Besides, if what they advanced had been false, they would have taken the precaution not to publish it in the same country where there were many persons who could have convicted them of falsehood. They appear, however, to have had so little design to deceive, that, far from concealing, as it was in their power, many disgraceful particulars, they frequently expose their own faults, the meanness of their birth, their weaknesses, their disputes, and other similar circumstances. Besides, as the doctrine which they preached prohibited a lie, they would themselves have been condemned if they had been impostors. Insisting likewise as they did on the practice of every virtue, and always declaring their horror of vice, and promulging its condemnation, their religion was worthy of the God whose existence they asserted, and could not have had its origin in a corrupted bosom. And what advantage

would they have derived from such an imposture? They suffered poverty, hunger, punishment, even death itself, and yet the most vigilant malice never suspected that they supported any other interest but that of truth. Can we believe that they could love what every other man abhors? Can we believe that God, who is goodness itself, should permit men to be deceived by supernatural and irresistible testimony, whose power of conviction would be increased, because it supported a doctrine worthy of his nature, and thus would supply Christians with an excuse for their errors, if the religion, which they had embraced, were one of them? How! would impostors court death in order to preach a religion which condemns an imposture? Let us consider also that in proportion as the alleged facts are incredible, the number of witnesses is increased. But it will be said, these witnesses are Christians; and

it is this circumstance precisely which gives to their testimony its greatest weight ; for had they not been Christians, we should not have so much attended to their assertions in favour of the truth, not knowing whether they themselves were convinced. Indeed, if St. Paul had remained a Jew, and St. Luke a Pagan, all that they could have said to the advantage and glory of the Christian revelation would have been without effect. That Dionysius the Areopagite, and Clemens of Alexandria, and a thousand other philosophers, should first have believed, and then have defended their belief, is consistent ; but would it not appear absurd that Suetonius and Tacitus should have panegyricized a sect to which they did not belong ? Yet is it not true, that those who do not sufficiently apprehend the force of this reasoning, would be more influenced by a passage in Tacitus in favour of the Christian religion, than they are by the  
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the numerous volumes of writers, formerly Pagan, as Justin and Athenagoras; and who, adhering to the truth, have exhibited the most forcible proof of their conviction; a consideration which constantly escapes the judgment of these gentlemen.

I am aware of all the objections which may be urged against some particular doctrines of the Christian Religion; but the principles which I have established being admitted, they may be refuted with ease. The little that I may have suggested in answer to these three principal classes of our adversaries, may suffice to shew the futility of the arguments which they employ, and the ease with which they may be silenced. Do not then permit yourselves to be dazzled by their reputation, their wit, or their irreverent raillery. Face the point of ridicule which begins to be blunted, and do not fear any contest, when clad in the im-

penetrable mail of reason. Doubtless this Essay which I offer, concerning the means of defence, required an abler hand ; but my zeal for the good of society has induced me to apprize its members of the danger which approaches, if these enemies of the Christian Religion continue to acquire an increase of vantage-ground. Let us then unite and oppose the common adversary with the same zeal at least, and with the same ardour with which he desires to wrest from us all that we esteem most dear. What ! shall a mischievous brood appear, that shall deprive man of his most potent solace in misfortune, and the philosopher of the hope which supports him in oppression, and that shall remove the fear which restrains the wicked ? These dangerous foes will attempt to spoil us of a good so useful without offering an equivalent. They will pursue this design with unequalled pertinacity, and shall not our opposition,

tion, which we are so interested in concerting, partake of the same vigour and perseverance? Shall we always allow them to boast that the day is theirs? *We shall perceive that the epoch of the ruin which menaces ourselves and our children must commence from that instant, when society shall welcome their execrable tenets*; and shall we unconcernedly observe it spread like a destroying plague from mind to mind, and from family to family? In truth, citizens, I am ashamed of the security in which you indulge yourselves with respect to this circumstance. You eagerly drain to the dregs the poisoned cup which they offer. You attend to an author who amuses you, and whom you love because he soothes your passions. Through a defect of curiosity, or a want of opportunity to examine the arguments which we oppose, you surrender your faith to these false reasonings, because the admission of them as true does not molest

left your indolence or interrupt your pleasures; and because the writer can shew a considerable degree of lively wit, you infer that he has the same share of reason on his side.

But let him employ all his genius and all his industry to persuade immoral men to renounce the religion of their fathers, if I have only succeeded in placing before the eyes of wise men the few arguments which I have just specified, I defy all their efforts and their continued endeavours to produce the expected effect.

I intreat my readers to reflect seriously on these admonitions. If you are the jealous guardians of your own welfare or that of your children, bar the avenues of your hearts against the entrance of the maxims of your enemies, and even of one of their arguments. When a single robber has  
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broken open your door, in vain shall you defend the passage against the rushing multitude.

As each individual composes a part of the public, the public interest becomes in a certain degree that of every private person. *I cannot therefore see a devouring fire spreading itself destructive of society, without suggesting some caution against the dangerous incendiaries, whose unwearied ardour is the more surprising, as they do not appear to have any peculiar interest in the success of their machinations; but, like modern Erostrates, they seem to have excited so great a conflagration only that they might acquire a name, although they should see the temple of God in ruins.*

## A P P E N D I X.

**A**FTER having established the proofs of the Christian Religion, I thought it would not be improper to add in this place, in a few words, the principles, and an abstract of this religion so well adapted to promote the welfare of those who practise its precepts as individuals, and to advance the interest of society in general. They are these:

As the posterity of Adam, we come into the world tainted with original sin, and prone to evil. There is not a man who has not experienced in himself this unfortunate tendency. We are placed here by God for a limited period, in order to work out our salvation, and by a holy and pious life purify ourselves from this

natural uncleanness, that we may regain in a future state that happiness which was prepared for us in this, but which we have lost by the offence of our first father. This work we cannot perfect by our own efforts alone, and without the assistance of the grace of God. This gift therefore should be the constant subject of our prayers. Our offences against a God infinite and omnipotent cannot be expiated by our own merits, which in his sight are confined and imperfect. God therefore in his mercy has sent his son Jesus Christ into the world, that he should suffer in our place, and thus restore us to his favour by his merits, which have no bounds.

Jesus Christ has not only appeased the anger of God against man, but has likewise established in his church two sacraments, Baptism and the Holy Supper, as aids in this work of our salvation.

By Baptism we are adopted, and become the children of God, and members of his church; we are dead to sin, and are placed in a condition by the grace of God to live a holy and religious life.

The Holy Supper reminds us of the death of Jesus Christ, which he suffered in order to atone for our sins. We eat the bread and drink the wine as emblems of the body and blood of Christ; we consider them as memorials of the agonies, by which we obtain remission of our sins, provided that we receive this sacrament with a strong resolution to repent of our transgressions, to lead a pure life, and to be in complete charity with all men; and then, and then only, do we receive at the same time the promise of being admitted into the kingdom of heaven, but still through the merits of Jesus Christ; and we can never expect to partake of the advantage of these



merits of our Saviour, but in as much as we shall have applied all our efforts to follow those examples of virtue and piety, which he has left for our imitation,

THE END.

*Other Works of Mr. DUTENS.*

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